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## **Senate fighting spread of invasive species in Michigan**

**LANSING** – Fighting the spread and destruction of invasive species in Michigan has received a major boost as the Senate voted to make protecting Michigan's ecosystem a top priority, announced Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, a package sponsor.

The Senate passed a package of bills today (Senate Bills 211-217, 507) that is designed to protect Michigan's environment from invasive plants and insects like the Eurasian milfoil, hydrilla and Emerald Ash Borer that destroy natural Michigan species.

"Foreign plants and insects crowd out our native vegetation and disrupt our natural ecosystems," said Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores. "We are already seeing the effects of this in our woodlands and waterways. This legislation will help our state fight the spread of invasive species so future generations can enjoy our bountiful natural resources."

SB 212, sponsored by Van Woerkom, would prohibit a person from knowingly possessing a prohibited or restricted species, except for identification, lawful eradication or control, or research purposes. The bill also would require a person to notify the proper authorities if a prohibited species was found to be in a location where it had not previously been known to be present.

Other bills in the package would:

- Identify prohibited insects and aquatic plant species;
- Amend the Natural Resources and Protection Act to recognize the existence of and prohibit genetically engineered or non-native aquatic plants;
- Establish fines and penalties for violating the new regulations;
- Require the DNR to post requirements and penalties on their website; and
- Establish a Non-native Species Advisory Council.

The Advisory Council would establish criteria for identifying infested waterways and make recommendations regarding the state's efforts to eradicate invasive species. The council also would report annually to the Legislature with recommendations for additions to the lists of invasive species and infested waterways.

This legislation is similar to prohibitions put in place last year to protect Michigan's waterways from invasion by non-native fish species.

The package now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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